

AUGUST 13, 1976

FOCUS: GERALD RUDOLPH FORD

INTRO: ALL EXPECTATIONS ARE THAT THE REPUBLICAN PARTY TONIGHT WILL CHOOSE GERALD FORD AS ITS PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEE FOR THE NOVEMBER ELECTION. PHILOMENA JUREY HAS A PROFILE:

TEXT: GERALD RUDOLPH FORD, THE THIRTY-EIGHTH PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, HAS EMERGED AS A NATIONAL POLITICAL FIGURE IN HIS OWN RIGHT AFTER ONE OF THE MOST EXTRAORDINARY CAMPAIGNS IN AMERICAN HISTORY.

HE CAME TO OFFICE UNDER CIRCUMSTANCES UNEQUALED IN THE NATION'S POLITICAL LIFE. APPOINTED VICE PRESIDENT IN NINETEEN SEVENTY-THREE, HE BECAME PRESIDENT ON AUGUST NINTH OF NINETEEN SEVENTY-FOUR WHEN RICHARD NIXON RESIGNED BECAUSE OF THE WATERGATE SCANDAL. HE FELT HIS MOST PRESSING JOB WAS TO RESTORE PUBLIC CONFIDENCE IN THE WHITE HOUSE, AND HE BELIEVES HE HAS SUCCEEDED IN DOING THAT. DURING HIS TWO YEARS AND NINE DAYS IN OFFICE, HE HAS FACED MANY TRYING MOMENTS, BUT HE IS CONFIDENT THAT HE MADE THE RIGHT DECISIONS, EVEN THE CONTROVERSIAL NIXON PARDON.

AN INCUMBENT PRESIDENT NORMALLY HAS EVERY RIGHT TO BELIEVE THAT HE DESERVES NOMINATION BY HIS PARTY FOR ANOTHER TERM IN THE WHITE HOUSE. BUT PRESIDENT FORD HAD TO FIGHT FOR IT. HE HAD TO WAGE AN ARDUOUS CAMPAIGN THROUGH THIRTY PRIMARY ELECTIONS AND TWENTY STATE CONVENTIONS THAT HAS TAKEN HIM FROM THE WINTER DAYS OF NEW HAMPSHIRE TO THE HOT AND HUMID SUMMER DAYS OF MISSOURI. IT WAS THE FIRST MAJOR CHALLENGE TO AN INCUMBENT PRESIDENT IN RECENT HISTORY.

GERALD FORD NEVER HAD WANTED TO BE PRESIDENT -- HE HAD HOPED SOME DAY TO BECOME SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES. BUT HE CAME TO ENJOY BEING IN THE WHITE HOUSE AND TACKLING THE

PROBLEMS THAT CAME TO HIS DESK.

HE STARTED HIS POLITICAL CAREER IN NINETEEN FORTY-EIGHT, WHEN HE DEFEATED AN ISOLATIONIST CONGRESSMAN IN THE REPUBLICAN PARTY PRIMARY AND WENT ON TO BE ELECTED TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES FROM GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN. HE WAS RE-ELECTED EVERY TWO YEARS, BECAME AN EXPERT ON DEFENSE SPENDING, AND WAS ELECTED HOUSE MINORITY LEADER IN NINETEEN SIXTY-FOUR.

MISTER FORD, AT SIXTY-THREE, IS WIDELY THOUGHT A WARM, FRIENDLY PERSON, WHO COMES THROUGH TO THE PEOPLE AS AN HONEST AND DECENT MAN.

HE IS VIGOROUS, A TIRELESS CAMPAIGNER WHO HAS WORKED HARD FOR REPUBLICAN PARTY CANDIDATES. A NATURAL ATHLETE, HE WAS A FOOTBALL STAR IN SCHOOL AND COLLEGE AND HE KEEPS IN SHAPE THROUGH DAILY SWIMS AND WEEKEND GOLF.

MISTER FORD HAS A POPULAR FAMILY -- HIS WIFE BETTY AND FOUR CHILDREN, PLUS A DAUGHTER-IN-LAW. THEY ARE ALL IN KANSAS CITY, SHARING THIS TIME WITH HIM.